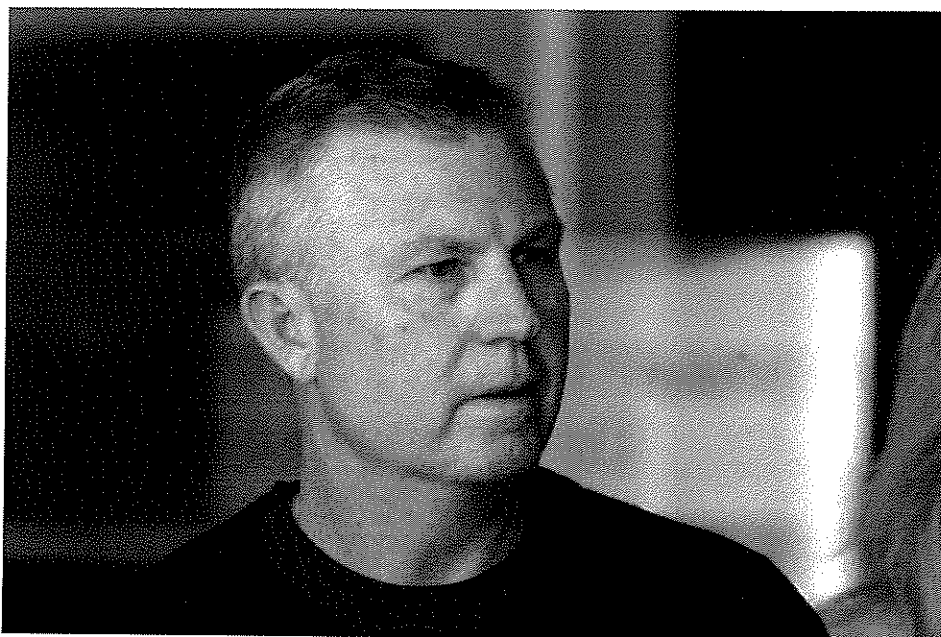


Child sex abuse accused WA MP James Hayward's bail conditions altered to attend cannabis forum

By Rebecca Trigger

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James Hayward resigned from the Nationals after he was charged with five child sex offences last year. (ABC News: Jon Sambell)

A WA member of parliament accused of child sex offences will be allowed to travel to Queensland to attend a three-day forum on medicinal cannabis after a magistrate agreed to vary his bail conditions.

Former Nationals MP and member of the WA Upper House, James Hayward, has pleaded not guilty to five charges relating to the alleged abuse of an eight-year-old girl, which include procurement for an indecent act and persistent sexual conduct.

Mr Hayward appeared in the Perth Magistrates Court this morning to request a variation to his bail terms, which require him to report to a police station three days a week and not leave the state.

The court heard he could not fulfil his duties and would have to resign his membership of a WA parliamentary committee looking into the current legislation and regulations of cannabis and hemp if he could not attend a symposium on the Sunshine Coast with the four other members.

The United In Compassion (UIC) 2022 Australian Medicinal Cannabis Symposium will be held at the Novotel Twin Waters Resort from May 20 to May 22.

Key points:

- James Hayward is on a parliamentary committee looking into cannabis
- The court heard he needs to attend the event to fulfil his duties
- A magistrate altered his bail conditions to allow his attendance

Advertising for the conference spruiks the hotel as a "one stop location ... on the beautiful Sunshine Coast Queensland".

"Consider staying on to experience all that the region has to offer from crystal clear beaches to adventures in the rain forest and picturesque Hinterland," it stated.

The other four members of the parliamentary committee are Brian Walker, Matthew Swinbourn, Jackie Jarvis and Lorna Harper.

The court heard two parliamentary staffers would also travel to the symposium.

Mr Hayward says he needs to attend the event in order to perform his role on a parliamentary committee. *(ABC News: James Carmody)*

Mr Hayward has previously stated publicly that he intends to remain a member of the Parliament of Western Australia and keep his salary, because if he resigned it would send a message that any person in public office can be removed by simply making an untested allegation.

MP attending event despite virtual viewing option

The events on offer at the symposium include a trade exhibition, a two-day symposium and gala dinner on May 21, but it does offer virtual viewing tickets for all programs.

The state did not oppose the application.

James Hayward indicated he intends to fight the charges when he faced court in February. *(ABC News: James Carmody)*

Magistrate Heidi Watson granted the variation, saying she believed the need to protect the complainant and children in general would be met under the variation.

Under his bail conditions, Mr Hayward is required to check in with the Australind Police Station every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

The magistrate agreed to vary two of his bail conditions so he was not required to check in to the station as usual on May 20 and May 23.

But she ordered that he not leave Melbourne Airport when transiting through there.

Mr Hayward's bail conditions still require him to have no unsupervised contact with a child under 16.

The magistrate said Mr Hayward should seek advice from his lawyer if he were to be seated next to a child during the trip, although she noted this was unlikely.

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Bail curbs go to pot

TIM CLARKE

The WA MP accused of sexually abusing an eight-year-old girl has had his bail conditions amended so he can attend a Queensland symposium discussing medicinal cannabis.

James Hayward resigned as a member of the Nationals WA — but refused to resign as an MP — after the allegations against him were revealed in late 2021.

Mr Hayward faced Perth Magistrates Court on Monday charged with three counts of indecent dealing with a child under 13, one count of procuring a child under 13 and one count of persistent sexual conduct.

The charges relate to allegations he abused an eight-year-old girl in 2021. He has pleaded not guilty.

Police originally opposed bail, saying there was a risk Mr Hayward would make contact with witnesses.

However, a magistrate eventually granted Mr Hayward bail

on a \$30,000 personal undertaking as well as a \$30,000 surety.

On Monday, through his lawyer, Mr Hayward applied to have that strict bail amended in two respects — his ongoing reporting to the Australind police station and that he not leave WA.

The court was told that as a member of the select committee into cannabis and hemp, Mr Hayward, pictured, was required to attend the Australian Medicinal Cannabis Symposium.

If he could not attend, the court was told, then he would be deemed unable to fulfil his responsibilities as a committee member and would have to resign.

The 52-year-old father of six receives a \$168,000 taxpayer-funded salary, a \$12,250 regional allowance, \$42,000 vehicle allowance and a \$20,000 travel allowance.

The application was granted by magistrate Heidi Watson.

Mr Hayward will return to court in June.

